NOTES AND DOCUMENTS

Giants and Fallen Angels in Dante and Milton: The *Commedia* and the Gigantomachy in *Paradise Lost*

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In *Paradise Lost*, Milton draws on the battle of the gods and giants recounted in various classical works to describe Satan and the fallen angels. While these ancient accounts were the primary source of Milton's mythology, the classical tradition was also available in medieval and Renaissance adaptations. One possible but overlooked source is Dante's *Commedia*, which places the classical giants in a Christian hell. In Dante's medieval epic Milton could find a precedent for linking the fall of the giants and the fall of Satan. Milton's treatment of classical myth sometimes departs from his likeliest Greek and Roman sources; on certain points, it more closely resembles Dante's Christianization of the ancient texts. Details of Dante's account match Milton's handling of the battle of the gods and giants, and both Dante and Milton allude to the gigantomachy in ways that suggest similar purposes.

Milton's interest in Dante was early and exceptional, for during the seventeenth century Dante was largely ignored even in Italy and rarely named in England.[1] Milton studied Italian before 1625, and during his years at Cambridge he acquired extensive knowledge of Dante, Petrarch, Ariosto, Boccaccio, Tasso, Boiardo, and other major Italian writers.[2] In his *Apology for Smectymnuus* (1642) he expresses his admiration of Dante and Petrarch, saying that above all artful but licentious authors he "preferr'd the two famous renowners of *Beatrice* and *Laura* who never write but honour of them to whom they devote their

1. See Irene Samuel, *Dante and Milton: The "Commedia" and "Paradise Lost"* (Ithaca, N.Y., 1966), p. 33.

2. See ibid., p. 35; see also Harris Francis Fletcher, *The Intellectual Development of John Milton*, vol. 2, *The Cambridge University Period, 1625–32* (Urbana, Ill., 1961), p. 307; and William Riley Parker, *Milton: A Biography*, ed. Gordon Campbell, 2d ed. (New York, 1996), 1:58.

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verse, displaying sublime and pure thoughts, without transgression."[3] Though this reflection on the poet's studies is difficult to date, J. Milton French suggests that Milton was remembering his experiences at St. Paul's School, which he probably entered in 1620.[4]

Milton apparently wanted to master Italian literature rather than gain only a cursory familiarity with it. In a September 10, 1638, letter to Benedetto Buonmattei, he professes the depth of his study of Italian, particularly of Dante and Petrarch:

> For anyone among them who is by chance more flourishing in wit than the rest, or in pleasing and elegant manners, has the Etruscan Tongue among his chief delights, yea rather considers it a solid part of his learning, especially if he has imbibed Greek and Latin either not at all or in moderate tincture. Certainly I, who have not merely wet my lips in these Languages but have drunk deeper drafts—as much as anyone of my years, am nevertheless glad to go for a feast to Dante and Petrarch, and to a good many of your other authors.[5]

As Irene Samuel has observed, Milton's reference to Dante is especially important, for Buonmattei was the leading Dante scholar of his time.[6] In *Of Reformation* (1641) Milton cites *Paradiso* 20.55–60 and provides an English poetic translation of *Inferno* 19.115–17;[7] and in lines 12–14 of his 1646 sonnet to Henry Lawes, he alludes to the "Casella" episode in *Purgatorio* 2.76–119. He knew Dante's *Monarchia*, owned a third (1529) edition of the *Convivio*, and was acquainted with the *Vita nuova* through the first (1576) edition published with Boccaccio's *Trattatello in laude di Dante*.[8]

Milton read the *Commedia* carefully, and he refers to it throughout his *Commonplace Book*.[9] He clearly used *Dante con l'espositione di M. Bernardino Daniello da Lucca* (1568), for in his entry "Usury," he cites *Inferno* 3 and Daniello's commentary on the canto.[10] He may also have turned to the editions and commentaries of Cristoforo Landino (1481) and Alessandro Vellutello (1544), which were often reprinted during the sixteenth century.[11] So great was Milton's understanding of Dante

3. John Milton, *Apology for Smectymnuus*, in *Complete Prose Works*, ed. Don M. Wolfe et al., 8 vols. (New Haven, Conn., 1953–82), 1:890; hereafter cited as *Complete Prose Works*.

4. *The Life Records of John Milton*, vol. 1, *1608–1639*, ed. J. Milton French (1949; reprint, New Brunswick, N.J., 1966), p. 32.

5. *Complete Prose Works*, 1:330.

6. Samuel, p. 38.

7. *Complete Prose Works*, 1:558–59.

8. David Wallace, "Dante in English," in *The Cambridge Companion to Dante*, ed. Rachel Jacoff (New York, 1993), p. 242.

9. *Complete Prose Works*, 1:366, 1:371, 1:384, 1:405, 1:418, 1:476.

10. Ibid., 1:418.

11. Samuel (n. 1 above), p. vi.

that David Masson claimed Milton knew the *Commedia* "better than any other Englishman alive."[12] Milton may have continued to consult the *Commedia* while he was working on his epic. The *Commonplace Book* entry "Religion," which cites *Purgatorio* 16, was written by an amanuensis.[13] James Holly Hanford has argued that the passage was written after 1650 and in the same hand as the extant manuscript of the first book of *Paradise Lost.*[14] John T. Shawcross has suggested that Milton began *Paradise Lost* around 1640, worked on it intermittently between 1642 and 1643 and then less frequently until 1655, spent more time on it between 1655 and 1658, and then completed it between 1661 and 1665.[15] Milton's editors have cited numerous echoes of Dante throughout the English poet's works, and scholars have compared the two poets for centuries.[16]

The *Commonplace Book* offers a key to understanding how Milton used Dante in his epic poem. Milton's references to the *Commedia* most often appear in his entries for various sins, such as avarice, suicide, sloth, and usury. Milton observes Dante's descriptions of the torments of the damned, and he praises the Italian poet's insights. In his entry for "Death Self-Inflicted," for example, he writes that "Dante's *Inferno* most skillfully describes the punishment of those people among the inhabitants of the infernal regions."[17] But while both Dante and Milton describe heaven and hell in sometimes similar ways, the epic vision of each is fundamentally different. For Masson, Dante is subjective while Milton is objective. Dante's poem grew out of his personal experiences, while Milton chose to record an already existing subject. "The difference is that the visual phantasy bequeathed by Dante was mainly a congeries of intense and intricate symbolisms of his own personality," Masson explains, "whereas that offered by Milton was mainly a sublime version of an independent objective tradition."[18] Through

12. David Masson, *The Life of John Milton: Narrated in Connexion with the Political, Ecclesiastical, and Literary History of His Time*, vol. 6, *1660–1674* (1880; reprint, New York, 1946), p. 535.

13. *Complete Prose Works* (n. 3 above), 1:476.

14. James Holly Hanford, "The Chronology of Milton's Private Studies," in his *John Milton, Poet and Humanist* (Cleveland, 1966), p. 102.

15. John T. Shawcross, *John Milton: The Self and the World* (Lexington, Ky., 1993), pp. 143–45.

16. See "Appendix A: A Table of Milton's References to Dante before *Paradise Lost*," in Samuel (pp. 285–86), for a list of citations to Dantean parallels in Milton's earlier works, and "Appendix C: Comments on the Relation of Milton and Dante, in Chronological Sequence," in Samuel (pp. 287–91), for a bibliography of comparative studies to the mid-twentieth century.

17. *Complete Prose Works*, 1:371.

18. Masson, 6:522.

their contrasting approaches, Dante and Milton populate their supernatural worlds in different ways.

In his epic Dante includes a number of contemporary and historical persons along with figures from classical and biblical mythology. Alison Morgan has counted three hundred inhabitants of Dante's otherworld, excluding the overseers in hell, the symbolic figures in the earthly paradise, and those figures mentioned only in simile and who thus do not actually dwell in Dante's visionary realm. Of those three hundred characters, eighty-four are classical in origin, forty-six are biblical, sixty-three are historical, and 107 are contemporary.[19] Ernst Robert Curtius noted earlier that the *Commedia* contains some 250 names from antiquity, including classical mythology; another 250 or so from more recent history, most of which were Dante's contemporaries; and roughly eighty characters from the Bible. "The great number and variety of persons in the *Commedia*," says Curtius, "is explained by the most impressive and most fertile innovation which Dante's genius incorporated into the antique and medieval heritage: his drawing upon contemporary history."[20]

While Dante is the poet of the particular, Milton is the poet of the universal. Because Milton depicts heaven and hell before the dawn of human history, he rarely features historical characters in *Paradise Lost.* Instead, the demons are types of individual persons. When he does mention such historical figures as Charlemagne or Galileo, he typically cites them in similes or other allusive modes.[21] But in the *Commedia* Milton could find medieval exemplars of particular sins. When Dante presents a sinner, whether mythical or historical, he often provides more than a passing allusion by elaborating the circumstances and punishments of carefully chosen characters. The details provided by Dante clarify the vision of his poem and help account for the appeal of his cantos to Milton. Milton could borrow features from Dante's treatment of both historical and mythical beings, such as the giants, to

19. Alison Morgan, *Dante and the Medieval Other World* (New York, 1990), pp. 54–62, 78–82.

20. Ernst Robert Curtius, *European Literature and the Latin Middle Ages*, trans. Willard R. Trask (Princeton, N.J., 1953), pp. 365–66. Based on her study of contemporary characters in other medieval accounts of the afterlife, Morgan qualifies Curtius's claim: "Although it is clearly not true to say that the 'most impressive and fertile innovation' of Dante in the creation of the *Comedy* is 'his drawing upon contemporary history,' Dante does give us a breadth of vision in his choice of contemporary characters which is found in no single preceding work" (p. 66).

21. John Milton, *Paradise Lost*, in *Complete Poems and Major Prose*, ed. Merritt Y. Hughes (Indianapolis, 1957), bk. 1, line 586 (for the reference to Charlemagne), and bk. 1, line 288 (for Galileo). All references to *Paradise Lost* use this edition and cite the text according to book and line, noted as *PL* in the text.

embellish his portraits of Satan and the fallen angels, much as he had registered admiration for Dante's descriptions of punishments in the *Commonplace Book*.

Milton first introduces the reader to the giants in book 1 of *Paradise Lost*, where he describes the vanquished Satan:

> in bulk as huge
> As whom the Fables name of monstrous size,
> *Titanian*, or *Earth-born*, that warr'd on *Jove*,
> *Briareos* or *Typhon*, whom the Den
> By ancient *Tarsus* held.
> (*PL* 1.196–200)

Several hundred lines later, he includes among the demons

> *Titan* Heav'n's first born
> With his enormous brood, and birthright seiz'd
> By younger *Saturn*, he from mightier *Jove*
> His own and *Rhea's* Son like measure found.
> (*PL* 1.510–13)

Through allusions to the Titans, Briareos, and Typhon, Milton equates Satan with the fierce monsters of classical mythology. Commentators have generally acknowledged that Hesiod's *Theogony* was Milton's most influential source and that Ovid's *Metamorphoses* and Conti's Renaissance *Mythologiae* were also significant.[22] Nevertheless, Linda M. Lewis has observed in her study of Milton's "Promethean politics" that "there has been surprisingly little attention to Milton's reworking of the Titan and Promethean iconography in *Paradise Lost*."[23]

While Milton's editors have noted the classical antecedents of his allusion to the gigantomachy, they have disregarded Dante's role in Christianizing the myth. As both pagan and pre-Christian compositions, the *Theogony* and *Metamorphoses* do not relate the Titans and the giants to the story of Satan's fall. In the *Theogony* Briareos emerges as

22. Among Milton's editors, Hughes cites *Theogony* 713–16, *Metamorphoses* 5.346–58, and *Mythologiae* 6.22 as sources (p. 216, n. 197); Alastair Fowler lists *Metamorphoses* 5.325–31 and 5.346–58, and *Mythologiae* 6.22 (*Paradise Lost* [New York, 1971], p. 55, n. 1.197–200); Roy Flannagan credits *Theogony* 820–68 and *Metamorphoses* 5.347–61 (*Paradise Lost* [New York, 1993], p. 125, n. 103); and Stephen Orgel and Jonathan Goldberg mention *Theogony* 713–16 and 819–85, *Metamorphoses* 5.325–31 and 5.346–58, and *Mythologiae* 6.22 (*John Milton* [New York, 1991], p. 855, n. 361). For an extensive discussion of Milton's possible sources for the gigantomachy, see Stella Purce Revard, *The War in Heaven: "Paradise Lost" and the Tradition of Satan's Rebellion* (Ithaca, N.Y., 1980), pp. 148–52. Revard does not mention Dante in her account.

23. Linda M. Lewis, *The Promethean Politics of Milton, Blake, and Shelley* (Columbia, Mo., 1992), p. 60.

an unlikely counterpart of Satan, for he does not fight against Zeus, as Milton suggests. Instead, he joins his hundred-handed brothers, Cottus and Gyes, in helping Zeus defeat the Titans (*Theogony* 713–20). Conti notes that according to Virgil (*Aeneid* 10.565–70), Aegaeon joined with other giants in a rebellion against Jove (i.e., Zeus). He then equates Aegaeon with Briareos, though he cites Homer (*Iliad* 1.400–406) and Hesiod (*Theogony* 734–35) in calling Briareos Jove's guardian.[24] If Milton had had Conti and Virgil in mind, he would have been likelier to allude to Aegaeon rather than to Briareos in his description of the fallen Satan.

In Dante, though, Milton could find clear parallels between Satan and Briareos and between the giants and the fallen angels. As Dante's pilgrim winds his way through the lower depths of hell, he meets the giant Ephialtes. Virgil tells the pilgrim that "Questo superbo volle esser esperto / di sua potenza contra 'l sommo Giove" [This proud one chose to try his strength against supreme Jove].[25] After seeing Ephialtes, the pilgrim then says to his guide:

> S'esser puote, io vorrei
> che de lo smisurato Brïareo
> esperïenza avesser li occhi mei.
> (*Inferno* 31.97–99)

[If it were possible, I should wish my eyes might have experience of the immense Briareus.]

Virgil explains that Briareos resembles Ephialtes, except for being more terrifying:

> Quel che tu vuo' veder, più là è molto
> ed è legato e fatto come questo,
> salvo che più feroce par nel volto.
> (*Inferno* 31.103–5)

[He whom you wish to see is much farther on, and he is bound and fashioned like this one, except that he seems more ferocious in his look.]

Typhon is in hell, too, for Virgil tells Antaeus, "Non ci fare ire a Tizio né a Tifo" [Do not make us go to Tityus nor to Typhon] (*Inferno* 31.124). Dante thus situates Briareos, Typhon, and the other giants of

24. *Natale Conti's "Mythologies": A Select Translation*, ed. and trans. Anthony DiMatteo (New York, 1994), pp. 34–35.

25. Dante Alighieri, *The Divine Comedy*, trans. with a commentary by Charles S. Singleton, 6 vols. (Princeton, N.J., 1977), *Inferno*, canto 31, lines 91–92. All references to the *Commedia* use this edition and cite the text according to separate title, canto, and line.

classical myth within the Christian hell and in close proximity to Satan.

As Dante's pilgrim works his way through purgatory, Briareos is mentioned again. In canto 12 of the *Purgatorio*, the pilgrim walks over flat tombstones that are carved to illustrate the dead buried beneath them. Some of the stones depict fallen giants:

> Vedea Timbreo, vedea Pallade e Marte,
> armati ancora, intorno al padre loro,
> mirar le membra d'i Giganti sparte.
> (*Purgatorio* 12.31–33)

[I saw Thymbraeus, I saw Pallas and Mars, still armed, around their father, gazing on the scattered limbs of the giants.]

The passage is an allusion to the battle of the gods and giants from classical myth, with details borrowed from Statius's *Thebaid*.[26] Immediately preceding this reference to the gigantomachy, Dante says that Satan and Briareos are both carved on a pair of stones:

> Vedea colui che fu nobil creato
> più ch'altra creatura, giù dal cielo
> folgoreggiando scender, da l'un lato.
> Vedëa Brïareo fitto dal telo
> celestïal giacer, da l'altra parte,
> grave a la terra per lo mortal gelo.
> (*Purgatorio* 12.25–30)

[I saw, on the one side, him who was created nobler than any other creature fall as lightning from heaven. I saw Briareus, on the other side, pierced by the celestial bolt, lying heavy on the ground in mortal chill.]

The engraving of Briareos is positioned alongside that of Satan, making the monster a classical counterpart of the fallen angel. The relief of Satan shows the angel falling from the heavens; the image of Briareos shows the aftermath of the fall.

Milton and Dante both focus on Satan and Briareos as fallen beings, while Virgil in the *Aeneid* describes Aegaeon's hundred arms and hands, fifty fire-breathing mouths, and violent battle against Jove, without mentioning Jove's victory (*Aeneid* 10.565–70). Statius likewise com-

26. The same allusion is noted in Theodolinda Barolini, *Dante's Poets: Textuality and Truth in the "Comedy"* (Princeton, N.J., 1984), p. 227, n. 6. Singleton, in his gloss on *Purgatorio* 12.28–30, similarly argues that Dante draws on details from *Thebaid* 2.595–601, as does Edward Moore, *Studies in Dante, First Series: Scripture and Classical Authors in Dante* (1896; reprint, New York, 1968), pp. 250–52.

ments on the ferocity of Briareos without describing Jove's triumph (*Thebaid* 2.595–601). But Milton's allusion to Briareos is part of his "Leviathan" simile, in which Satan

> extended long and large
> Lay floating many a rood, in bulk as huge
> As whom the Fables name of monstrous size.
> (*PL* 1.195–97)

At the close of the simile, Milton reemphasizes Satan's proneness: "So stretcht out huge in length the Arch-fiend lay / Chain'd on the burning Lake" (*PL* 1.209–10). The image recalls Dante's Briareos, "grave a la terra per lo mortal gelo" [lying heavy on the ground in mortal chill] (*Purgatorio* 12.30).

While Virgil, Hesiod, and Conti number the grotesque features of Briareos and Aegaeon, Milton and Dante instead allude to the monster's enormous size. Dante describes Briareos only as being "grave" (heavy [*Purgatorio* 12.30]) and "smisurato" (immense [*Inferno* 31.98]). The "Leviathan" simile in *Paradise Lost* shows that Satan is "in bulk as huge" as Briareos (*PL* 1.196). Unlike Hesiod's fifty-headed monster, Satan lies with his one "Head up-lift above the wave" (*PL* 1.193). Likewise, from the two hands, not a hundred, of the erect Miltonic Satan "the flames / Driv'n backward slope thir pointing spires" (*PL* 1.222–23). Dante's Briareos, too, resembles Ephialtes or Antaeus, the anthropomorphic giant with whom Hercules once fought (*Inferno* 31.100–135), although he is more terrifying; he does not have the grotesque features of the Hesiodic monster. "Since Ephialtes is two-armed (31.87)," notes Walter Stephens, "Virgilio effectively denies that any Giants, even Briareus, were ever physiologically deformed."[27] By extension of the inference this would mean that Dante's Typhon was also human in shape. As with Briareos, Milton like Dante alludes to Typhon only to illustrate Satan's tremendous size, not to attribute a grotesque form.

In the *Commedia*, Dante undertakes to correct inaccurate pagan conceptions of Briareos, the giants, and classical myth. The pilgrim learns that while the ancients stressed the physical deformities of the giants, their monstrous features were psychological rather than physiological. So too, in *Paradise Lost*, Milton shows that the Ionian gods, the Titans, Briareos, and Typhon are all classical representations of Satan and the rebel angels. Satan can assume many physical shapes, though his substance remains the same. Both Dante and Milton approach the

27. Walter Stephens, *Giants in Those Days: Folklore, Ancient History, and Nationalism* (Lincoln, Nebr., 1989), pp. 69–70.

gigantomachy as an imperfect rendering of Christian truth, and each poet illuminates the reality behind the ancient myth.

While Christian truth serves to clarify the classical gigantomachy in both epics, Dante and Milton also use the battle of the gods and giants to demythologize the fall of the rebel angels. Dante's pilgrim undergoes a process of spiritual maturation and indoctrination in which the reader also participates, for the pilgrim represents humanity and the truths revealed to him have universal significance. Sins are first depicted in the *Inferno* and then cleansed in the *Purgatorio.* The Briareos of Dante's epic introduces the pilgrim and the reader to Satan. The monster is first mentioned when the pilgrim enters Cocytus, and asks for Briareos by name, enchanted by the idea of seeing the mythological monster with his hundred hands and fifty heads.[28] Here sin does not repulse the pilgrim—or the reader—as it should. By way of correction, Dante strips away the captivating mythological features of Briareos and the other giants, making it clear that they all resemble humans except for their size. In this regard, rather than glorifying their enormity through exaggerated comparisons, he relates the giants' proportions to the dimensions of the physical world. Nimrod's face seems

> lunga e grossa
> come la pina di San Pietro a Roma,
> e a sua proporzione eran l'altre ossa.
> (*Inferno* 31.58–60)

[as long and huge as the pine cone of St. Peter's at Rome, and his other bones were in proportion with it.]

Three Frieslanders would have had trouble reaching his hair (*Inferno* 31.63–64), but perhaps four could have done so; while the pilgrim saw "trenta gran palmi / dal loco in giù dov' omo affibbia 'l manto" [thirty great spans of him down from the place where a man buckles his cloak] (*Inferno* 31.65–66). Antaeus "ben cinque alle, / sanza la testa, uscia fuor de la grotta" [stood full five ells, not reckoning his head, above the rock] (*Inferno* 31.113–14).

With such precise anthropomorphic descriptions Dante removes the giants from the realm of fable and makes them less appealing to the imagination. Moreover, in introducing the pilgrim and the reader to Cocytus, these giants define Satan's dimensions and demythologize him in like manner. As small as the pilgrim is in relation to the giants, the giants are yet smaller in comparison to Satan:

28. Stephens agrees that Dante's pilgrim has an "implied desire to see the Giant's fabled hundred hands" (ibid., p. 69).

Lo 'mperador del doloroso regno
da mezzo 'l petto uscia fuor de la ghiaccia;
e più con un gigante io mi convegno,
che i giganti non fan con le sue braccia:
vedi oggimai quant' esser dee quel tutto
ch'a così fatta parte si confaccia.
(*Inferno* 34.28–33)

[The emperor of the woeful realm stood forth from midbreast out of the ice; and I in size compare better with a giant than giants with his arms: see now how huge that whole must be to correspond to such a part.]

In purgatory, Dante's pilgrim and the reader learn further of the true nature of Briareos and Satan. Not only divested of their physical uncanniness, both Briareos and Satan are vanquished, powerless, and entombed, as the carvings on the paving stones show.

As in the *Commedia*, Briareos and the other giants are the reader's first introduction to Milton's Satan. The monsters' physical qualities help to delineate Satan's appearance, while their pride and ultimate failure bespeak his character and destiny. Additional details in Milton's epic recall Dante's images. Satan stands "like a Tow'r" (*PL* 1.591), and Virgil informs Dante's pilgrim, "sappi che non son torri, ma giganti" [know that these are not towers, but giants] (*Inferno* 31.31). Satan is tied "In Adamantine Chains" (*PL* 1.48) and lay "Chain'd on the burning Lake" at the end of Milton's "Leviathan" simile (*PL* 1.210); Dante's Ephialtes is similarly bound:

A cigner lui qual che fosse 'l maestro,
non so io dir, ma el tenea soccinto
dinanzi l'altro e dietro il braccio destro
d'una catena che 'l tenea avvinto
dal collo in giù, sì che 'n su lo scoperto
si ravvolgëa infino al giro quinto.
(*Inferno* 31.85–90)

[Who had been the master to bind him I do not know, but he had his right arm shackled behind, and the other in front, by a chain which held him clasped from the neck downward, so that upon his uncovered part it was wound as far as the fifth coil.]

Milton says that "the tallest Pine / Hewn on *Norwegian* hills, to be the Mast / Of some great Ammiral, were but a wand" compared to Satan's spear (*PL* 1.292–94). His imagery and diction recall Dante's Nimrod, who is compared to "la pina di San Pietro a Roma" [the pine cone of St. Peter's at Rome] (*Inferno* 31.59), and Antaeus, who stands "come albero in nave" [like the mast of a ship] (*Inferno* 31.145).

Like Dante's pilgrim, the reader of *Paradise Lost* is initially enthralled by Milton's fallen angel. But *Paradise Lost*, also like the *Commedia*, engages the reader in a process of theological discovery so that by the end of the poem the devil has lost his glamour.[29] Milton's allusions to the gigantomachy in the "Leviathan" simile initiate this process of revelation, for like Satan the rebellious giants have already been defeated. Near the end of the poem when Satan is forced to assume the shape of a serpent and to eat ashes, his allure has completely vanished (*PL* 10.504–77). The description here of the serpentine devils is laden with allusions to snakes from classical lore, including Ophion (*PL* 10.581), a fallen Titan.[30] This reference relates Satan once again to the Titans of the "Leviathan" simile as well as to Typhon, from whose shoulders grow a hundred snake heads (*Theogony* 824–25). Like Dante's pilgrim in *Purgatorio*, who sees Satan alongside Briareos, Milton's reader now sees Satan alongside the mythological figures to which the fallen angel had been compared in book 1.

For both both Dante and Milton, the gigantomachy was a myth of rebellion with political overtones. In the classical myth the giants rebel against Jove, their supreme god. In Dante's version the giants of classical lore are grouped with Nimrod, whom Augustine had called a "giant," "a hunter against the Lord," and the king who, "with his subjects, erected a tower against the Lord, which is a symbol of his impious pride."[31] The proud and rebellious giants are linked with historical persons, including the traitors Brutus, Judas, and Cassius, who writhe, caught in the jaws of Satan's three mouths (*Inferno* 34.55–67). As the apostle who betrayed Christ, Judas represents all members of the Church who betray their faith. So too, Archbishop Ruggieri is punished for betraying Count Ugolino (*Inferno* 33.1–90), as is Fra Alberigo, a churchman who had cunningly murdered Manfred and his son (*Inferno* 33.109–32).

29. See Stanley Eugene Fish, *Surprised by Sin: The Reader in "Paradise Lost"* (New York, 1967).

30. Hughes traces the allusion to *Argonautica* 1.503–6, where Apollonius explains that the Titan Ophion and his wife Eurynome ruled Olympus until their defeat by Saturn and Rhea (Hughes, ed. [n. 21 above], p. 420, n. 581). Fowler argues that Milton's Ophion is an allusion to *De raptu Proserpinae* 3.332–56, where Claudian describes the rotting carcass of Ophion as one of Jove's spoils from the gigantomachy (Fowler [n. 22 above], p. 537, 10.578–84n).

31. Augustine, *The City of God against the Pagans*, vol. 5, trans. Eva Matthews Sanford and William McAllen Green (Cambridge, Mass., 1965), bk. 16, chap. 4. The Vulgate says Nimrod "erat robustus venator coram Domino" [was a strong hunter in the presence of the Lord] (Gen. 10:9), but it neither calls him a giant nor clearly says that he built the Tower of Babel. Augustine, working with the Greek Septuagint, argued that the preposition ἐναντίον (*enantion*, an equivalent of Latin *coram*) means both "before" and "against," and that thus Nimrod was really a hunter against the Lord.

Like Dante, Milton was embroiled in the political turmoil of his day. While carefully distinguishing Dante's Catholic epic from Milton's Protestant one, Dorothy L. Sayers points to the many similarities between the lives of the two poets and their mutual opposition to corruption within the church.[32] Lewis has likewise compared the political views of Dante and Milton, arguing that both poets combined the myths of Satan and Prometheus, a classical Titan, to condemn tyranny.[33] Sharing with Dante a commitment to the separation of the church and state, Milton could read the *Commedia* with close attention as a political work. "That the authority of a king does not depend upon the Pope, Dante the Florentine wrote in the book whose title is Monarchia," noted Milton in his *Commonplace Book*, adding, "a book which Cardinal Poggietto had burned as an heretical work, as Boccaccio asserts in his life of Dante, in the earlier editions, for in the later ones all mention of that fact was taken out by the inquisitor."[34] Milton's entry "Religion" additionally cites *Purgatorio* 16 as a warning of the dangers of combining political and ecclesiastical powers: "That the combining of ecclesiastical and political government (when, that is to say, the magistrate acts as a minister of the Church and the minister of the Church acts as a magistrate) is equally destructive to both religion and the State, Dante, the Tuscan poet, shows in his Purgatorio."[35] And in *Of Reformation*, where Milton cites *Inferno* 19.115–17 and *Paradiso* 20.55–60, he criticizes the so-called Donation of Emperor Constantine the Great, who allegedly gave Rome to the church and moved his capital to Byzantium after having been cured of leprosy by Pope Sylvester I.

Milton could look upon Satan as an archetypal tyrant who defies God, seduces the angels, and deceptively leads humanity to damnation. In Hesiod and Ovid he could read the gigantomachy as a classical analogue of the war in heaven. In Dante he could find the classical gigantomachy combined with biblical myth to yield commentary on political theory, Christian doctrine, and historical fact. As his *Commonplace Book* documents, Milton valued Dante's views on the punishment of sins, the corruption of the clergy, and on the necessary separation of the church and the state. Their similar experiences and common perspectives disposed Milton to adapt details from Dante's version of the gigantomachy in the *Commedia* in order to advance his own political and theological outlook in *Paradise Lost.*

32. Dorothy L. Sayers, "Dante and Milton," in *Further Papers on Dante* (London, 1957), pp. 148–82.

33. Lewis (n. 23 above), pp. 4–5, 35–54, 55–110.

34. *Complete Prose Works* (n. 3 above), 1:438.

35. Ibid., 1:476.